

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DUBAN 0048

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, SF
SUBJ: TURNER/MTSHALI AFFAIR: THE QUESTION SAG COMPLICITY

REF: DURBAN 012, 016

1. STEPHEN MTSHALI, A BLACK FORMER ANC MEMBER WHO GAVE STATES EVIDENCE IN AN ANC TRIAL, AND PROFESSOR RICHARD TURNER, A BANNED WHITE RADICAL WHO TESTIFIED IN BEHALF OF BPC DEFENDENTS, WERE ATTACKED AT THEIR HOMES WITHIN AN HOUR OF EACH OTHER ON THE EVENING OF JANUARY 11. TURNER WAS KILLED BUT MTSHALI IS RECOVERING UNDER POLICE GUARD. THERE HAS BEEN A RASH OF PUBLIC SPECULATION ON THE POSSIBLE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ATTACKS AND THE IDENTITY OF THE PERPETRATORS. THE S.A. POLICE HAVE TENDED TO DISCOUNT THE LIKELIHOOD OF A LINK BETWEEN THE SHOOTINGS. THEORIES THAT THE ANC MIGHT BE INVOLVED IN THE TURNER MURDER HAVE BEEN WIDELY DISCOUNTED, PARTLY BECAUSE OF TURNER'S KNOWN ANC PROCLIVITIES BUT MORE SPECIFICALLY SINCE THE EXTERNAL AND (LONDON) REPORTEDLY DENIED RESPONSIBILITY.
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THE ASSUMPTION, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN THAT THE ANC CARRIED OUT THE MTSHALI ATTACK.

2. THERE WOULD NOW SEEM TO BE NO DOUBT ABOUT THE LATTER. A SENIOR DURBAN POLICE OFFICER HAS INFORMED POST THAT TESTS SHOW MTSHALI WAS FIRED ON BY THE SAME WEAPONS WHICH KILLED BLACK DETECTIVE LEONARD NKOSI IN SEPTEMBER 1977. NKOSI'S

KILLING WAS ACKNOWLEDGED BY THE EXTERNAL ANC. (INFORMATION ON USE OF THE SAME WEAPON HAS NOT YET BEEN RELEASED TO THE PRESS, ACCORDING TO THE POLICE OFFICIAL.)

3. POST HAS ACQUIRED AN ALTERNATE THEORY ON TURNER'S DEATH WHICH, WHILE CLEARLY CONJECTURAL, BEARS DISTURBINGLY SUFFICIENT PLAUSIBILITY TO WARRANT EXAMINATION. HARRY PITMAN, THE PROMINENT NATAL ATTORNEY AND FORMER PROG FED M.P., HAS EXPRESSED TO US HIS CONVICTION THAT TURNER'S MURDER WAS A DELIBERATE COUNTER-TERROR OPERATION CONDUCTED EITHER BY THE S.A. SECURITY POLICE OR A RIGHT-WING GROUP RESPONSIVE TO THEIR BIDDING. PITMAN REASONS THAT AFTER THE NKOSI ASSASSINATION THE POLICE FORESAW A RASH OF ATTACKS ON SAG WITNESSES UNLESS A PROMPT EXAMPLE WAS MADE. THUS (HE GOES ON) IT WAS DETERMINED TO AVENGE THE NEXT WITNESS TO BE ATTACKED. PITMAN BELIEVES TURNER WAS A LOGICAL TARGET BOTH BECAUSE OF SAG AGGRAVATION AT HIS LABOR INVOLVEMENT (REFS) AND SUBSTANTIAL DEFENCE ASSISTANCE DURING THE BPC TRIAL (IN WHICH PITMAN WAS ALSO INVOLVED); AND BECAUSE AS A BANNED WHITE HE WAS EASILY LOCATABLE AND REACHABLE ON SHORT NOTICE INCLUDING AT NIGHT. PITMAN ACKNOWLEDGES THAT HIS THEORY CONSISTS MAINLY OF CONJECTURE. HIS BELIEF THAT IT IS CORRECT IS FOUNDED ON SEVERAL PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS WITH SECURITY POLICE OFFICIALS WHO, HE SAYS, FRANKLY STATED THAT IT MIGHT AT SOME POINT BE NECESSARY TO FIGHT FIRE WITH FIRE IF THE PROBLEM OF POLITICAL ASSASSINATIONS GOT "OUT OF HAND"

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4. COMMENT: IF ACCURATE, PITMAN'S THEORY WOULD SUGGEST A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF POLICE CONTINGENCY PLANNING NOT TO MENTION THE REQUISITE POLITICAL DETERMINATION AND LEEWAY TO ENABLE THEM TO ATTACK TURNER WITHIN AN HOUR OF MTSHALI'S SHOOTING. POST HAS NOT PREVIOUSLY REGARDED TURNER AS THAT BIG A THORN IN THE SIDE OF THE SAG. HOWEVER WE RECENTLY WERE TOLD THAT IN A RESPONSE TO THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR (WHO WAS PLEADING FOR TURNER TO RECEIVE A HUMBOLDT FELLOWSHIP), POLICE AND JUSTICE MINISTER JIMMY KRUGER ADAMANTLY REFUSED ON THE BASIS THAT "TURNER IS THE MOST DANGEROUS MAN IN SOUTH AFRICA".
FARBER

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